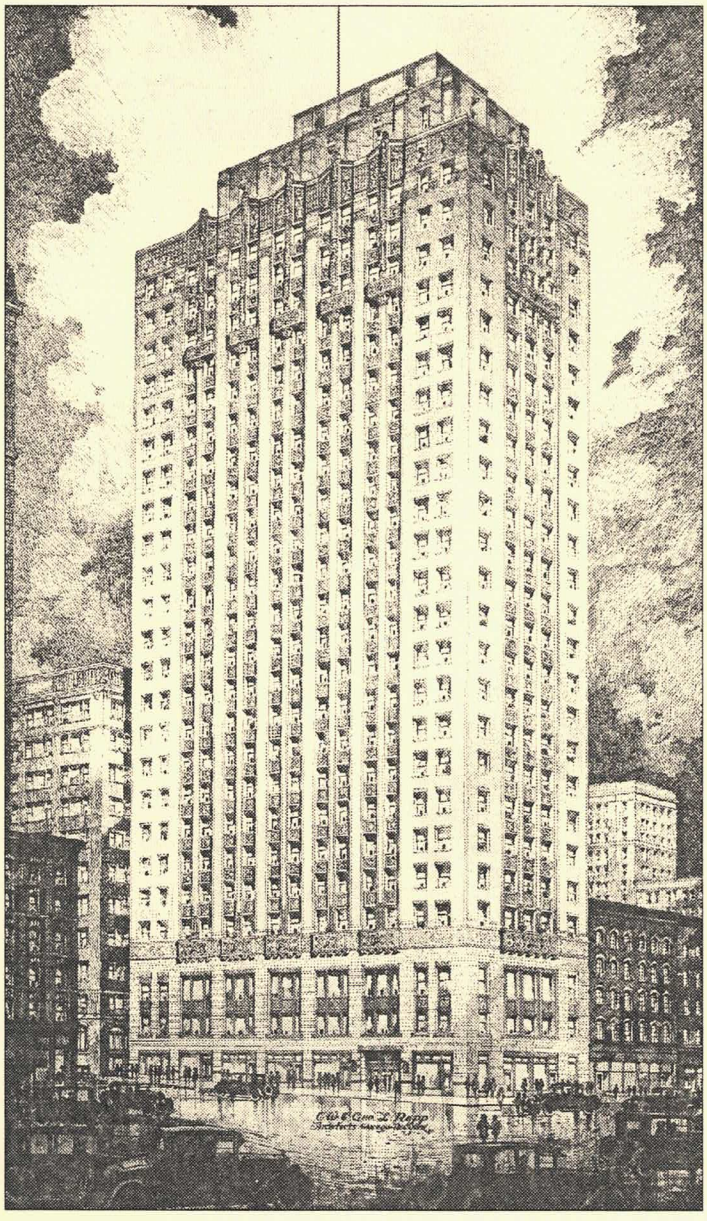
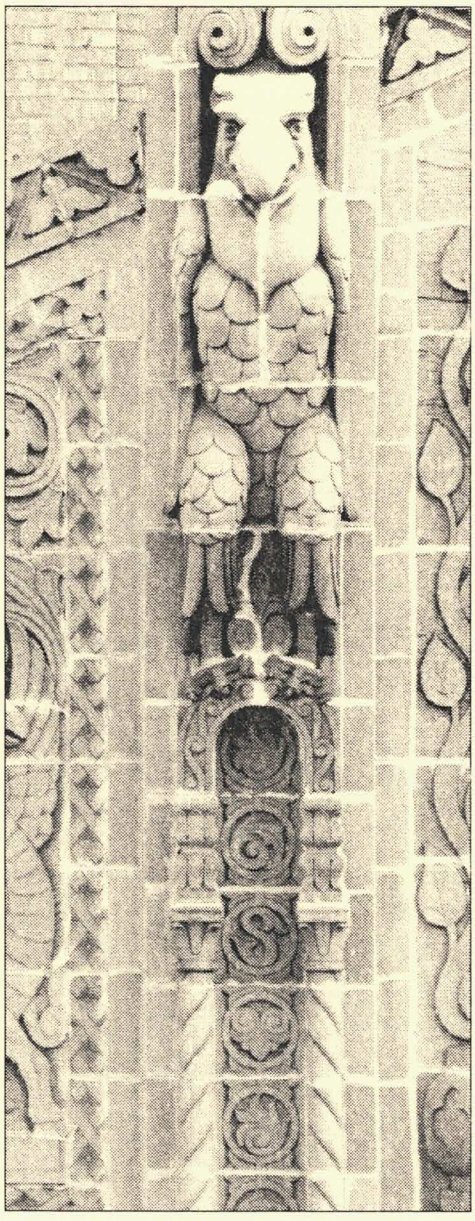
LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT





Old Dearborn Bank Building

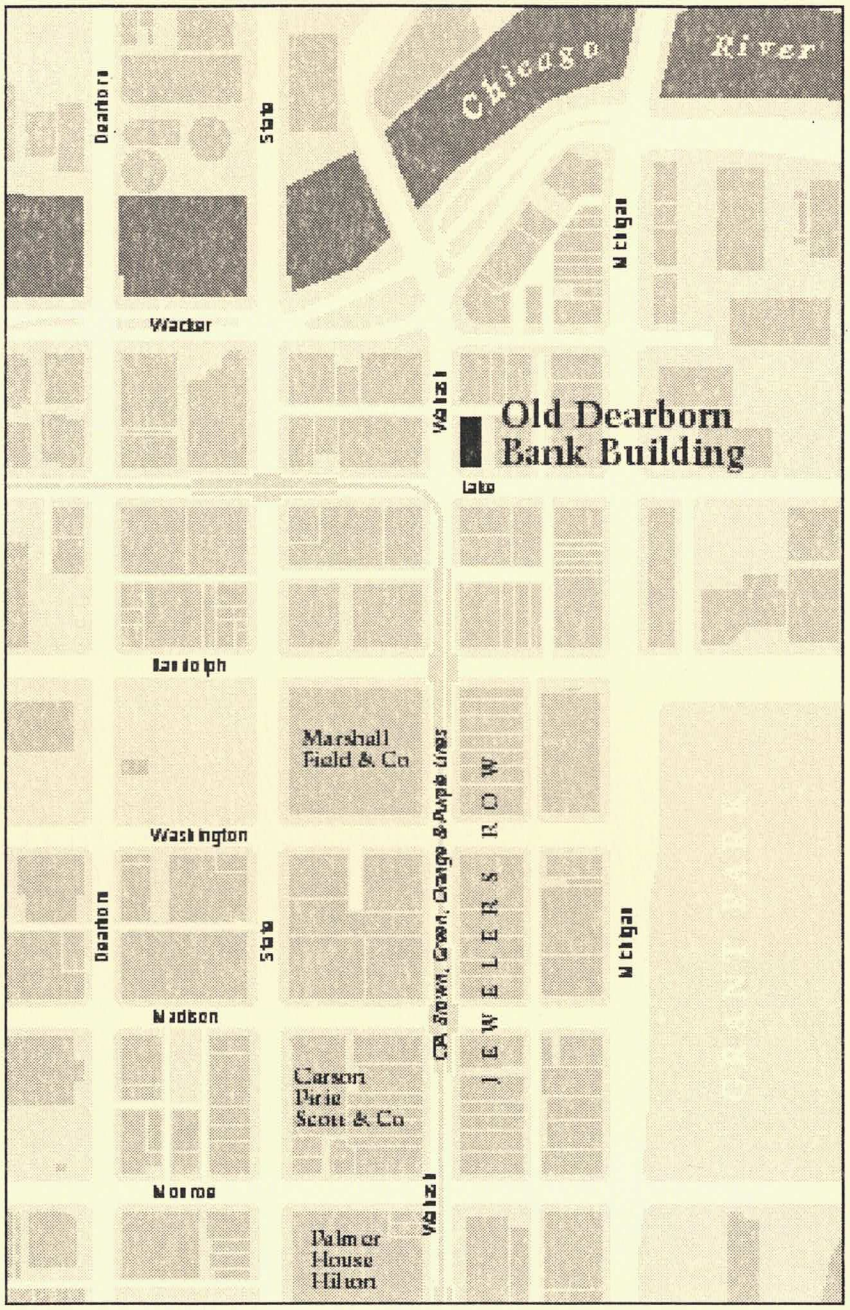
203 North Wabash Avenue

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in April 2003

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Alicia Mazur Berg, Commissioner

Right: Map showing location of the Old Dearborn Bank Building in the Loop.



The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; phone: 312.744.3200; TTY: 312.744.2958; fax: 312.744.9140; web site: http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

Old Dearborn Bank Building

Originally known as the Lake-State Bank Building

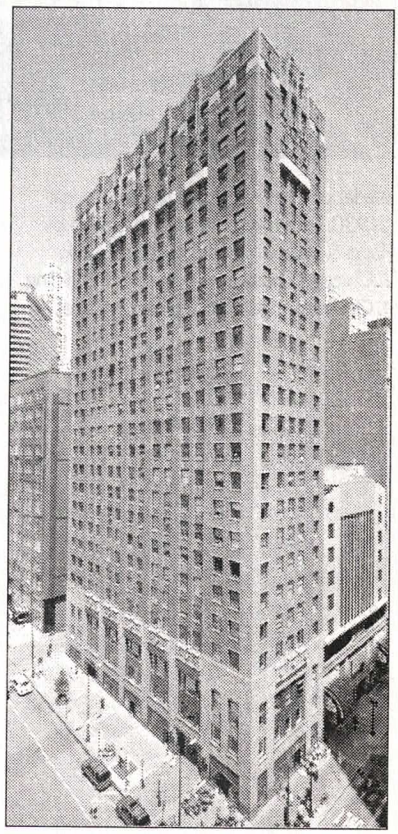
203 North Wabash Avenue

Date: 1928
Architects: C.W. & George L. Rapp
(Arthur F. Adams, design associate)

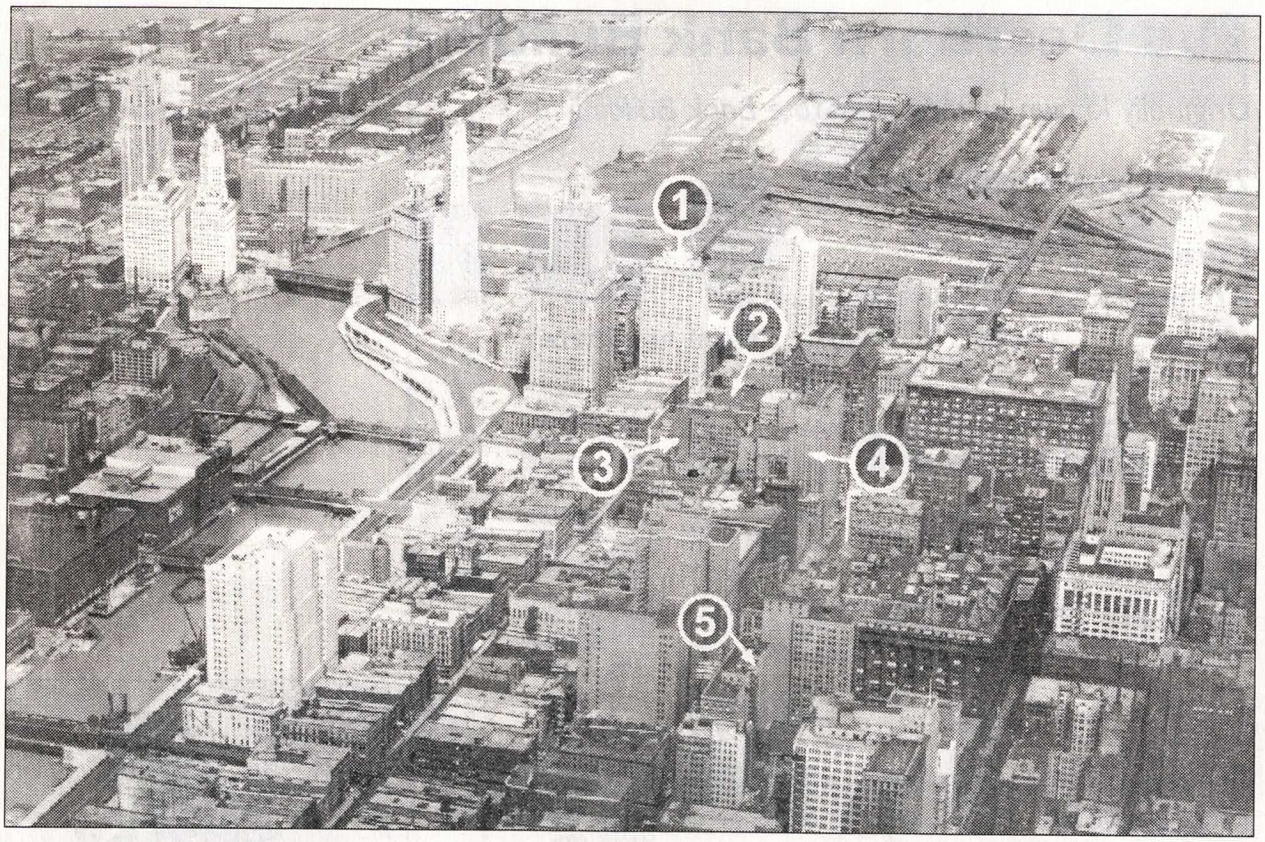
When rounding the corner at Lake Street and Wabash Avenue on the Loop elevated train, observant riders will immediately be struck by the fanciful gryphons, mythical figureheads, and other fantastic ornament looking down on them from the unusual Old Dearborn Bank Building. Although elegantly simple in form, the Old Dearborn Bank Building defies the conservative color and ornament of the typical 1920s Chicago skyscraper with its warm, earthy color and exotic decoration.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building is one of only two buildings designed solely for offices by the Chicago architectural firm of C.W. & George L. Rapp. By the time they designed this building, the Rapp brothers were internationally known for the ingenious engineering, masterful planning, and flamboyant interiors of their movie palaces. Rarely, however, were they given an opportunity to design a free-standing office building. This is their only such building in their native Chicago. To the Old Dearborn Bank Building they brought all of their skillful attention to planning and detail and overlaid it with the exotic ornament and rich textures more typical of the Art Deco style in New York City and Los Angeles.

The design of the Old Dearborn Bank Building successfully blends elegant Chicago School skyscrapers, exotic movie palaces of the 1920s, and the rich textures and materials of the new and thoroughly modern Art Deco style.



The Old Dearborn Bank Building in 2003.



Aerial photo of the north Loop area, c.1930, showing buildings designed by Rapp & Rapp. 1. Old Dearborn Bank, 2. Chicago Theatre, 3. State-Lake Building, 4. Oriental Theatre, 5.Bismarck Hotel.

Building History & Description

The Old Dearborn Bank was founded in 1919 as the Lake-State Bank, with James L. Kraft, founder of the Kraft cheese empire, as the first Chairman of the Board. Its offices were at 186 N. State Street near the corner of Lake Street in the Loop. During the boom years of the early 1920s, the bank's assets grew rapidly, and in 1925 the directors acquired a vacant lot at the northeast corner of Wabash Avenue and Lake Street and began planning for their own building. The luxurious architectural offices of C.W. and George L. Rapp were on the top floor of the State Lake Building immediately adjacent to the bank, and the Rapps' flamboyant Chicago Theatre and Oriental Theatre were both nearby. The Bank's directors hired the well-known architectural firm and by late 1926, Rapp & Rapp were working on the final details of their design for the new building. Construction cost $1.5 million and the Old Dearborn Bank Building was completed in 1928.

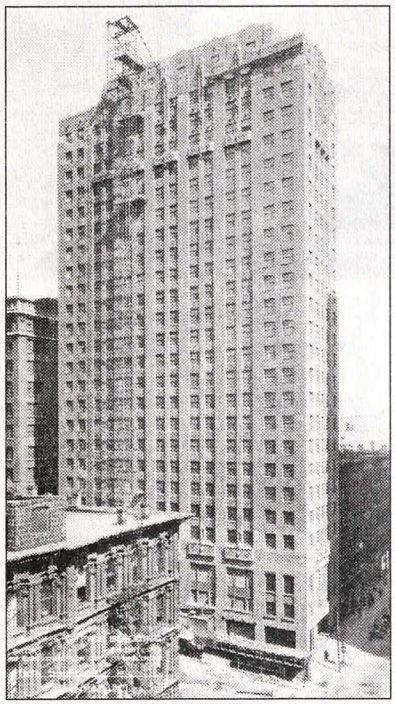
The construction of the Old Dearborn Bank Building marks an important epoch in the development of the northeastern downtown commercial district. A description of the proposed Lake State Bank Building in

Aerial photo of the north Loop, c.1930, showing the extent of new development including the Old Dearborn Bank Building (marked with arrow). Until the early years of the 20th-century, this area had been used by the South Water Street produce market. Many late 19th-century low-rise commercial buildings are still visible amongst the newer skyscrapers.

The Economist noted that when the bank opened in 1919 it was located in "what was then an apparently neglected part of the business district," but by 1925 conditions in the area had "materially changed." Up until the early 1920s, wholesale activities dominated the area around South Water Street and the eastern end of the Chicago River. With the opening of the Michigan Avenue Bridge in 1920 and the start of construction on Wacker Drive, these wholesale markets were moved several miles west of the city, creating opportunities for major redevelopment of the north Loop area. The extravagant Jewelers (later Pure Oil) Building of 1926 set the pace for new construction in the area around Wabash Avenue and Wacker Drive. The opening of the Wabash Avenue Bridge in 1927 further added to the area's desirability. It was suddenly not only acceptable, but fashionable, to build elegant office buildings north and east of Lake Street and Wabash Avenue.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building is typical of the "professional office and tall shops building" described in the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Loop Retail Historic District. The Pittsfield Building (1927) at 31-39 N. Wabash and the Medical & Dental Arts Building (1926) at 179-187 N. Wabash are two other nearby examples of this particular building type. All of these tall, narrow office buildings provided space for the small businesses, service providers, and medical practitioners that were an essential part of downtown activity prior to the growth of suburbia after the second World War. These office buildings offered reasonable rents on spaces that were in close proximity to the popular State Street corridor and to the Loop's elevated railway line.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building is located on the northeast corner of Lake Street and Wabash Avenue at the northern edge of Chicago's historic retail district. It is a 24-story office building with a small 48' x 140' footprint. It has an internal steel frame structure with exterior masonry cladding. The lower three floors, which originally contained the bank and a handful of small retail establishments, are clad in terra cotta with cast iron spandrel and window ornament. The upper floors are clad in a warm tan-colored brick with recessed terra cotta panels in the spandrels. The top 5 floors are richly ornamented with both textured and figural terra cotta panels. An ornamented stepped-back penthouse contains the building's mechanical equipment.

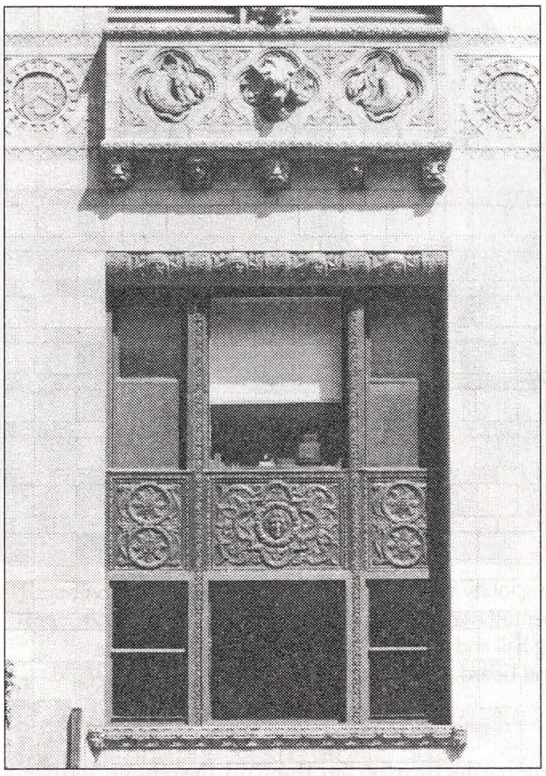


A construction photo of the Old Dearborn Bank Building, c.1928. The Building is an unusual mixture of exotic terra cotta and warm-hued bricks used on a tall, narrow Art Deco skyscraper.

Although somewhat typical in its overall form, the Old Dearborn Bank Building is a significant departure from Chicago's conservative office buildings of the 1920s. It retains the three-part design—base, shaft, capital—made popular for tall office buildings by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan during the 1890s. It also reveals its underlying steel frame through the use of ornamented spandrels and brick piers. However, it breaks with the conservative historicizing designs of the '20s in three fundamental ways: the architects' strong use of color, the building's exotic ornament, and its flat roof and stepped-back mechanical penthouse.

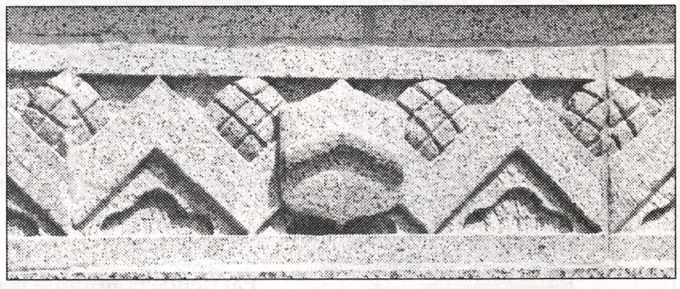
The exterior of the Old Dearborn Bank Building has a gray terra cotta base and upper stories faced with tan bricks and terra cotta. The first floor contains storefronts and the building entrance on Wabash Avenue. A narrow band of terra cotta with Art Deco zigzag ornamentation ties the storefronts together at waist height. The terra cotta facing and bold decorative reliefs of the first three floors were meant to emphasize the presence of the bank's offices behind these elevations. (It should be noted that the original second and third floors contained the main banking hall and, on the interior, were treated as a single floor with a mezzanine.)

The Lake Street elevation has five bays. The Wabash Street elevation has 14 bays. On the base (floors 1-3) of both facades the end bays are ornamented with carved limestone or terracotta headers, sills, and spandrels. The central bays are treated as a single unit with cast bronze spandrels and piers. The upper stories have recessed spandrels ornamented with square cast terra cotta panels that run in a repeating rhythm up the façade, adding to the building's soaring verticality.



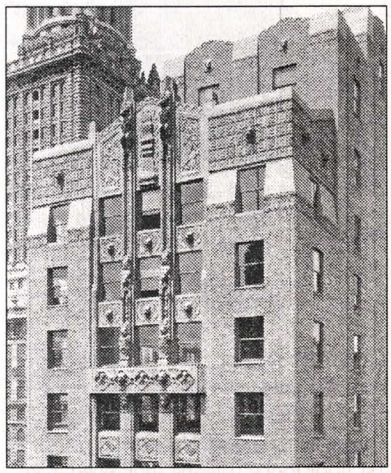
Left: Detail showing balconette at 4th floor and highly decorated windows of the 2nd and 3rd floor bank offices.

Below: Ornamental band on The Old Dearborn Bank building.



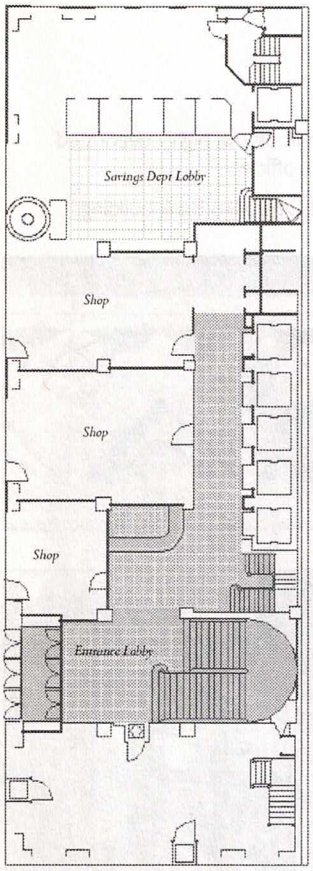
A broad, richly decorated band separates the base from the building's main floors (4-19) and a similar band separates the main floors from the even more highly decorated top floors (20-24) and parapet. Most notably, in the center of these two bands is a balcony-like projection supported on brackets shaped like animal and human heads. On the front of the balcony are quatrefoils with boldly three-dimensional reliefs of mythical animals. Above the balcony are two arched niches supported on the shoulders of squirrels that project from the piers between the windows.

Although not as immediately visible as the street level decorations, the dramatic and exotic ornament of the upper parapet of the Old Dearborn Bank Building gives it a lively and distinctive silhouette. The balcony-like projection of the fourth floor is repeated on both elevations, as are the arched niches. These upper niches contain lion head sculptures. At the level of the 24th floor, rope-turned pilasters on the piers create an elongated upper niche that is surmounted by a large griffin (mythological creature combining visual features of lions and eagles). The griffin is flanked by trapezoidal relief panels of mythical horses and swirling foliage. Taken together, this decorative scheme creates the effect of broad gables between tall expanses of textural terra cotta blocks. These same gables are echoed in the brickwork and zig zag edges on the tall mechanical penthouse that lies behind the parapet.



Detail of the upper parapet and the ornamental, stepped-back mechanical penthouse.

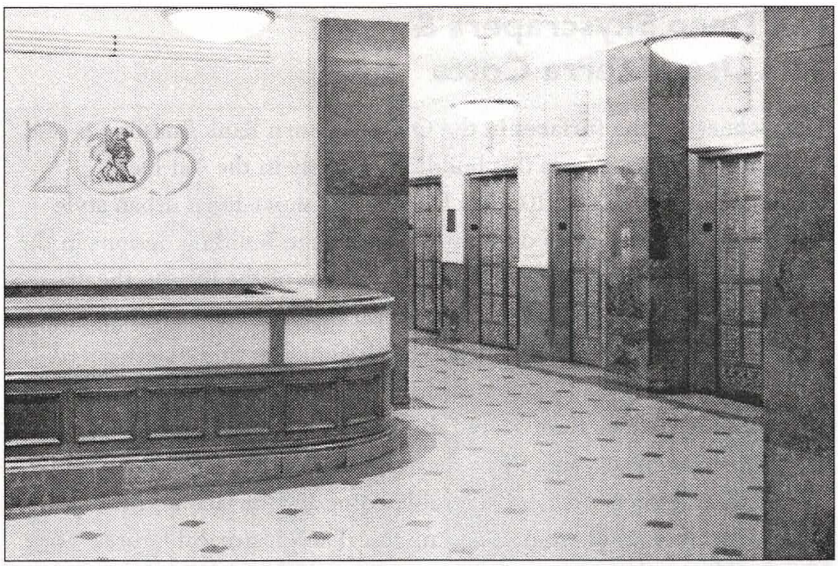
The Old Dearborn Bank Building lobby showing curving marble walls, terrazzo floors, marble stairs and highly ornamented metal railing. This grand staircase leads up to what was once the 2nd floor banking hall and down to the building's basement, which originally contained the vault and board room.



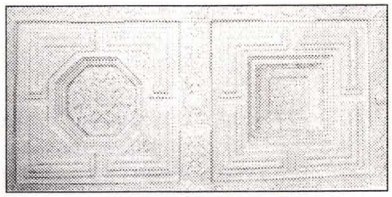
Original first-floor plan, Old Dearborn Bank Building in 1928. The first-floor "Savings Dept. Lobby" has since been converted to retail space. The current 1st floor lobby (slightly shortened from its original configuration) and staircase are shaded.

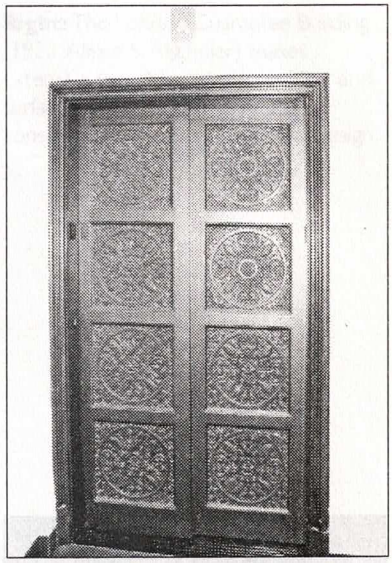
Particularly notable is that the decoration on the Old Dearborn Bank Building is carried fully around the building onto the alley on the north and along the party wall to the east. Although these elevations are not readily visible to the passerby, Rapp & Rapp clearly felt that they deserved to be treated as integral parts of the design and the owners were willing to spend the money to carry out the full decorative scheme.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building lobby is a series of spaces guiding the pedestrian to the building's various functions. Originally there were two Wabash Avenue entrances—one on the far north end primarily for banking customers and a more southerly primary entrance. Only the primary entrance still exists. The main lobby contains the original building directory and a richly-ornamented grand staircase leading down to the basement (originally housing bank offices and vaults; now subdivided) and up to the second floor banking hall (now subdivided for offices). To the north of this grand stairway, through an archway, lies a curving cigar and newspaper stand (now a security desk). The curve of the cigar stand directs one into the corridor containing the six passenger elevators. The four southern elevators have similar doors. The different decorative scheme of the northern elevator seems to indicate that it was strictly for bank customers. All of the elevator doors have brightly reflective, intricately detailed cast brass panels. The elevator corridor



The lobby of The Old Dearborn Bank Building.





Top: The intact lobby ceiling is elaborately detailed coffered plasterwork.

Bottom: The elevator doors are cast bronze. This is the northernmost elevator that serviced only the banking floors. Other elevators have a different design to indicate that they were for the use of upper office floors.

originally opened to the north into a cross-corridor containing the north entrance. At the north end of the building was a small area of walk-up teller cages for the bank, all of which (including the original north entrance) has now been converted to retail space.
All of the first floor lobby spaces have richly coffered plastered ceilings, polished golden marble walls, and multi-colored terrazzo floors.
The five first floor retail establishments were originally accessible from both the lobby areas and the street: these lobby entrances have been plastered over.

The lower three floors of the Old Dearborn Bank Building were designed around the bank's space needs, with the grand staircase serving as the focal point. This broad staircase, with its oak handrail, metalwork balustrade and curving marble-faced walls, circulated patrons up to the 2nd floor banking hall and down to the more private bank vaults and Board Room. The bank's dominant presence in the building was evident from both the exterior design and from the interior layout.

Rapp & Rapp gave the banking spaces rich and exotic finishes. The two-story banking hall had a deeply coffered ceiling of molded plaster animals and naturalistic shapes painted with rich reds and browns. (This decoration has been severely damaged and is now concealed above a newer dropped ceiling.)

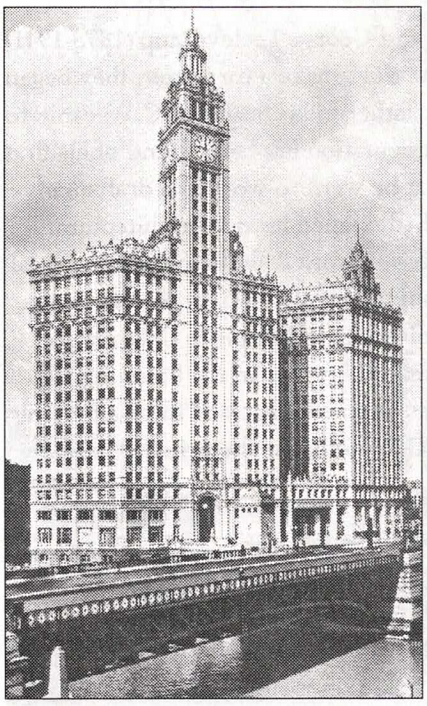
Art Deco Skyscrapers & The Use of Terra Cotta

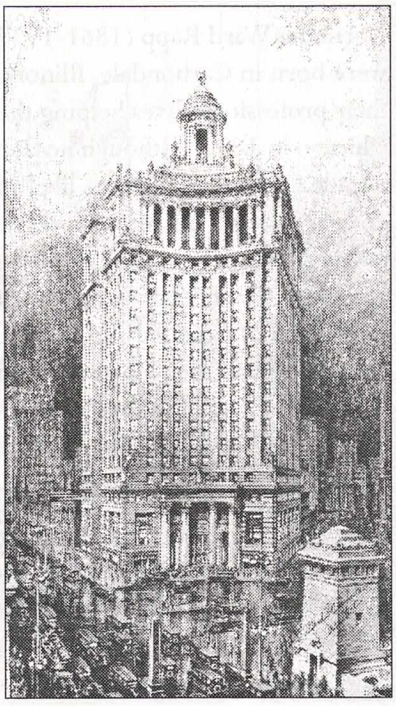
The richness of the surfaces in the Old Dearborn Bank Building is one of the features that places this building squarely in the Art Deco movement of the late 1920s. Art Deco was a short-lived urban style that brought a number of different influences to building designs in the 1920s, including European decoration, images of the future, theatre set design, and the surface ornamentation typical of the Chicago School of architecture. Architects who designed in this style wanted their buildings to be accessible to the average citizen, popular and entertaining. George Rapp noted that "The great masses of the people are hungry for beauty in a form they can assimilate and understand." Art Deco architects used considerable color and surface texture along with exotic images of animals and mythical and historical figures. They also used a very broad range of materials, including brick, stone, terra cotta, and all types of metal, wood, and marble. Art Deco designs were strongly influenced by contemporary stage set design, with entrance and cornice decorations often resembling elaborate stage sets or rippling curtains. Lobbies and other public spaces were richly detailed with a full and interwoven program of ornament. Art Deco mined the past for imagery that would speak to the future—a future that was eagerly anticipated during the optimistic and energetic 1920s.

Relatively few Chicago office buildings of the 1920s were designed in the Art Deco style and most were stone clad and used the setbacks that were, by then, characteristic of New York skyscrapers. The Chicago Board of Trade (1930, Holabird & Root) and the Palmolive Building (1930, Holabird & Root) are good examples of this Chicago Art Deco.

More typical of Chicago designs in the 1920s are revival styles such as the soaring white Gothic Revival Tribune Tower (1922) and the imposing white Neoclassical Revival London Guarantee Building (1923), both also clad in limestone. Special note should be made of the use of terra cotta in the 1920s for Chicago skyscrapers. This extremely versatile material first became popular in Chicago in the 1890s as a cladding material for the new steel-framed skyscrapers. By the 1920s it was used extensively on small-scale commercial buildings for both color and texture, providing great variety at relatively low cost. Terra cotta could be had in a multitude of colors and finishes and could be either custom-made or ordered from numerous catalogues of stock parts. Terra cotta could also be modeled into a wide range of forms, from the fully three-dimensional to the more textural pattern blocks. This excellent material was a key component of the exotic imagery, rich coloration, and gleaming surfaces so typical of auto-oriented 1920s developments.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building, with its exotic ornament and brick-clad walls, is unusual in the context of Chicago Art Deco-style skyscrapers. The Palmolive Building (1929, Holabird & Root, shown above), with its limestone cladding and many setbacks, is more typical.





Left: The Wrigley Building (1919-1924) is an outstanding example of a 1920s highrise clad entirely in terra cotta.

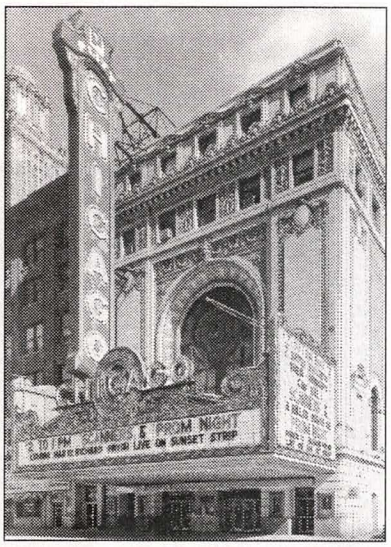
Right: The London Guarantee Building (1923, Alfred S. Alschuler) makes extensive use of limestone cladding and surface decoration for its relatively conservative Neoclassical Revival design.

Its low cost, wide range of colors and ease of installation made terra cotta particularly suitable for the decoration of movie theatres. Rapp & Rapp used terra cotta lavishly in all their designs of this period. They were regular customers of at least two of Chicago's three terra cotta firms: the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company (Chicago Theatre), the Midland Terra Cotta Company and the American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Company (Oriental Theatre).

By the 1920s, some Chicago skyscraper designs began to incorporate extensive terra cotta ornament. Buildings that did use terra cotta were either entirely terra cotta clad (like the Pittsfield Building, built in 1927) or used terra cotta to achieve polychromatic affects like those on the 1929 Carbon & Carbide Building. For the most part, however, Chicago skyscrapers of this period are entirely stone clad or stone with metal spandrels. At the Old Dearborn Bank Building the Rapps combined the exotic terra cotta ornament that they were so familiar with from their extensive movie palace designs with a warm buff brick. As in their use of Art Deco design features, their use of terra cotta and brick is a departure from the more typical Chicago designs of this period. The Old Dearborn Bank Building's ornament, with its combination of mythological animal figures and ornament based on geometry or plants, is highly unusual among Chicago office buildings.

C.W. & George L. Rapp

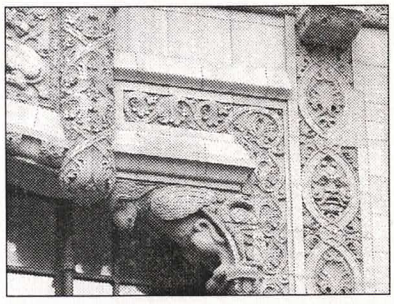
Cornelius Ward Rapp (1861-1927) and George Lesley Rapp (1878-1941) were born in Carbondale, Illinois. As the sons of a carpenter, they began their professional lives helping their father in his business. C.W. came to Chicago in 1891. Although no documentation has been found of his first decade in the city, it seems likely that he went to work as a draftsman in an architect's office. By 1900 he had opened his own architectural office, although he continued to do design work & drafting for other local architects for several more years. In the meantime, George enrolled in the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois in Champaign, graduating in 1899. He quickly joined his brother in the booming city of Chicago. In 1906 the two brothers established what was to be a lifelong partnership for both of them, with C.W. acting as the primary designer and George as the salesman.



The Chicago Theatre is one of three movie palaces Rapp & Rapp designed for downtown Chicago. They also built movie palaces in many of Chicago's neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs, as well as throughout the United States.

It was George, however, who led them to what was to be the most lucrative part of their practice. In 1905 George acted as the assistant designer to Edmund R. Krause, architect of the Majestic (now Shubert) Theatre & Office Building. At the Majestic, Krause initiated the idea of lounges for theatre-goers that were based on various themes. After going into partnership together in 1906, the Rapp brothers were to develop this idea of a theme to eventually encompass all aspects of a theatre's design. A Rapp & Rapp theatre might draw on Egyptian, Moorish or Rococo sources for its details, for example, and it would often blend several different exotic sources in the same design scheme. The essence of a Rapp & Rapp design, according to George L. Rapp, was its "showmanship—the act of dealing in superlatives that lends color and glamor to everything in the theatrical business." In order to obtain this showmanship, Rapp & Rapp designs made lavish use of costly materials "involving expensive use of several crafts." Extensive plaster-work, ornate light fixtures and extravagant terra cotta details were all hallmarks of Rapp & Rapp's theatre designs.

In the early years of the 20th century movies, which were very brief, were shown in small storefront theatres. At larger theatres they were interspersed with other live entertainment. By 1915, however, movies were becoming longer, more widely available and extremely popular. The Chicago firm of Balaban & Katz decided to build a theatre exclusively for the screening of motion pictures. They hired Rapp & Rapp to design the Central Park Theatre at 3531 W. Roosevelt Road in 1916. With 2400 seats, this was the first deluxe movie theatre in Chicago. The success of the Central Park led Balaban & Katz to commission the Rapp



The Oriental Theater (top right) and Uptown Theater (top left) are typical of Rapp & Rapp movie palaces of the mid-1920s, full of richly-colored three dimensional exotic ornament both inside and out. They advertise their presence with a striking one-word lighted sign of monumental proportions. Each has a grand staircase and a series of lobbies to move patrons through the building efficiently. Both are detailed with handsome terra-cotta ornament, as seen in a detail from the Oriental Theater (above).

brothers to design a series of theatres so big that they came to be called "movie palaces." The largest of these was the Uptown Theatre, which seated 4500 people and had eight lobbies to handle the crowds between screenings. By 1930, Balaban & Katz controlled over 400 movie theatres in the Chicago area, most of them designed by the firm of C.W. & George L. Rapp.

In order to handle the massive quantity of work entailed in the design and construction of dozens of movie theatres, the Rapp & Rapp firm employed 150 people throughout the 1920s. In 1925, Barney Balaban, nephew of A.I. Balaban, went to New York to head up Publix-Paramount Theatres, an arm of Paramount Pictures. The fame of Rapp & Rapp went with him, and soon the brothers found themselves designing movie theatres throughout the United States and Europe. During the 1920s they constructed buildings valued at over $100 million.

Rapp & Rapp's theatre designs were executed in every imaginable style, from Neoclassical to Moorish, from the most restrained to the most exuberant, from plain white to richly colored. George Rapp felt that these movie palaces were "a shrine to democracy where the wealthy rub elbows with the poor." The exciting and exotic details found throughout

the theatre were seen as an extension of the entertainment provided by the movies themselves. Plush carpeting, lavish plasterwork, crystal chandeliers and sconces, sweeping stairways, lounges that looked like Hollywood dressing rooms, and children's playrooms with merry-go-rounds were all part of the extraordinary effort made by the Rapps and Balaban & Katz to attract a continuous stream of customers to their theatres.

The Rapps were also known for their engineering innovations, including the unobstructed views provided by their cantilevered balcony, outstanding seating layouts and internal planning, and sophisticated air-conditioning systems. The final secret to the Rapps' success was their meticulous attention to detail in all areas of design and construction.

Rapp & Rapp-designed theatres often had an adjacent office building. Typically the size of the adjacent building reflected the size of the city where the complex was located. In Chicago the State-Lake Theatre (1917) has an office building adjoining it and the Bismarck Hotel (1926) contains a large, fully-developed theatre. Even the National Press Club (1925-27) in Washington, D.C. contains a theatre buried deep within it.

Although their work was dominated by their theatre designs, Rapp & Rapp also designed a handful of very high quality hotels and office buildings. Their only "free-standing" office buildings, both built within the very brief period between 1925 and 1927, were the Paramount Building in New York's Times Square (1926) and the Old Dearborn Bank Building in Chicago. The Paramount (which had its theatre nearby, but not in the building) was an Art Deco behemoth on Broadway near 42nd Street, meant to proclaim the importance of Paramount Pictures to the entertainment world. Its illuminated clock tower and flashing globe were clearly visible from Times Square. Despite the sudden, unexpected death of C.W. Rapp in 1926, the firm continued its collaboration with Paramount and opened an office in New York to provide oversight for its many Paramount theatre projects. At the height of the Depression, in 1932, when new theatre construction had come almost to a standstill, George Rapp was called in as a consultant during the design and construction of Radio City Music Hall.

The designs for The Paramount Building were on the drawing board in the Rapp & Rapp offices at the same time as the designs for the Old Dearborn Bank Building were underway. While the construction of the bank was delayed, the wildly successful opening of the Paramount Building must have convinced both the Rapps and their chief designer, Charles F. Adams, that the popular and unmistakably modern Art Deco design and exotically derived ornament of the Old Dearborn Bank were a good choice. It seems likely that Adams played a key role in the Rapp brothers' successful use of Art Deco designs at this time. The design for

the bank clearly recalls both the parapet shapes and the verticality of Adams' fourth place 1922 ChicagoTribune Competition design, and it was Adams who was chiefly responsible for the successful Art Deco design of the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre (1927).

Later History of the Building

Neither the Rapp brothers nor their client could have known, when work on the bank's design began in 1925, that the booming prosperity of the 1920s was about to come to an abrupt end. The banking industry in Chicago was in a particularly vulnerable position, with over 1300 state-chartered banks dominating the flow of money throughout Illinois. Private, unchartered banks had been outlawed in Illinois in 1921. As a result, the number of state-chartered banks had dramatically increased. The Old Dearborn Bank was founded in 1919 as part of this surge, with 124 new banks chartered that year and an astonishing 416 new banks chartered in 1920. By 1925 there were three times as many state banks as there were national banks in Illinois. Most of these banks were relatively small, with a minimum capitalization of $200,000, and deposits that were not backed by a state-sponsored reserve. In hindsight, the weakness in this system seems obvious.

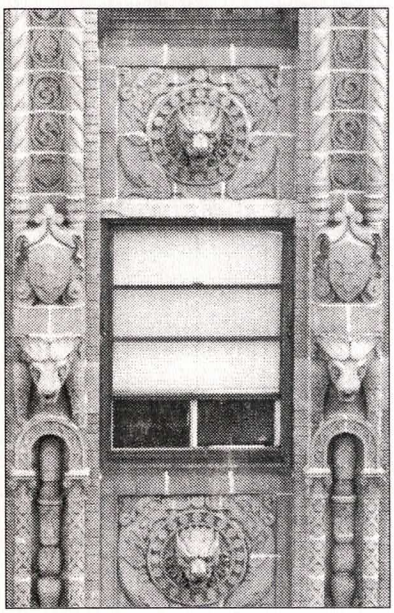
As the second largest banking center in the country, Chicago was hit particularly hard by the advent of the Depression in late 1929, with 109 banks closing in 1931 and 1932. The assets of the Old Dearborn Bank were acquired by the Chicago Bank of Commerce in 1931, but it too was liquidated the following year. The Depression also put a halt to most new construction in the downtown area. Unlike many downtown office buildings, some of which were demolished to avoid having to pay taxes on them, the Old Dearborn Bank Building managed to remain occupied throughout this period. The list of tenants during the 1930s provides its own interest. The 1930 *Central Business & Office Building Directory* lists nearly two dozen tenants that were social service organizations catering to women and children. The League of Women Voters, the Children's Home Aid Society, the YWCA, and the Chicago Association of Day Nurseries are just some of the organizations housed in the building at this time. The Chairman of the Old Dearborn Bank at the start of the Depression was Lucius Teter, an important local businessman who had been the President of the Infant Welfare Society since 1912. It seems likely that his influence and the role of the Infant Welfare Society in "organizing women's groups to support the Society" brought these social service organizations onto the rent rolls at the Old Dearborn Bank Building.

In the years since its construction, the Old Dearborn Bank Building has always been considered one of Rapp & Rapp's most notable office building designs. It was first published in the June 1928 edition of *Western Architect*. It is mentioned in a 1937 *Chicago Daily News* article about the Rapp brothers. This article was the sixth in a series on the builders of Chicago. It is also mentioned in George L. Rapp's 1942 Illinois Society of Architects obituary along with just a handful of his other designs. More recently, the building has appeared in the Association for Preservation Technology's booklet *Wild Onions: A Brief Guide to Landmarks & Lesser-Known Structures in Chicago's Loop* and in the *AIA Guide to Chicago*. The Old Dearborn Bank Building is a contributing building in the 1998 Loop Retail National Register District and it received an "orange" rating in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey.

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and 630, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary and final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following criteria should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Old Dearborn Bank Building be designated as a Chicago landmark.

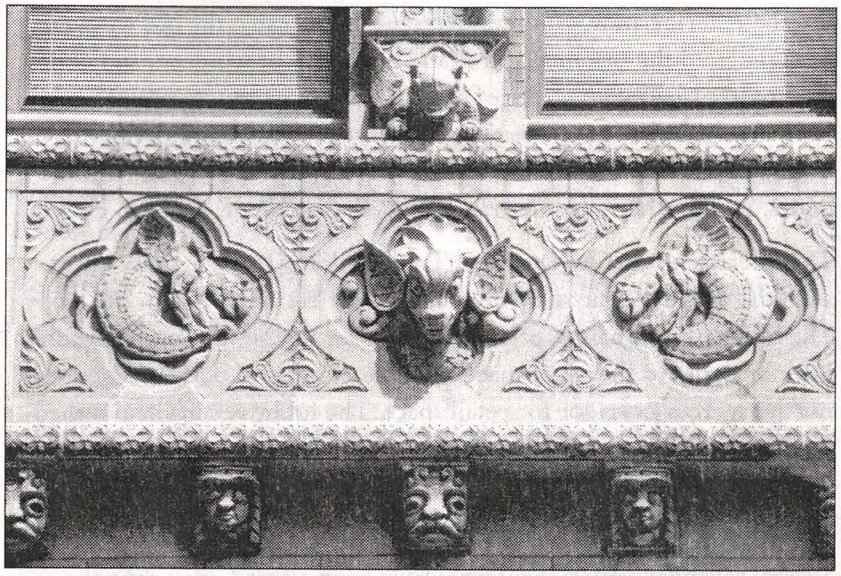


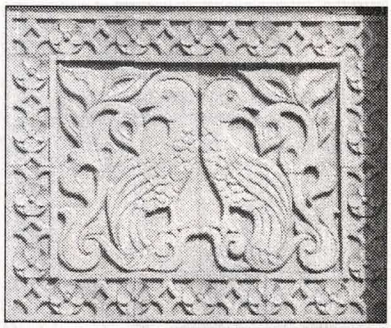
Terra cotta spandrels and exotic ornament supporting the upper parapet.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Old Dearborn Bank Building is a fine Art Deco-style office skyscraper completed during the building boom of the late 1920s.
- The exoticism and exuberance of the terra cotta ornament on the Old Dearborn Bank Building are unusual for a Chicago office building and exemplify fine craftmanship.
- The lobby of the Old Dearborn Bank Building exhibits excellent design, use of materials, and craftsmanship. The rich polished marble, decorative metalwork, and detailed plasterwork exemplify the kind of ornamentation and formality that were considered essential for the serious business of banking.





Above: Terra cotta spandrel.

Left: Terra cotta projection below the 4th floor windows. This projection is repeated around the south, west and north elevations.

Below: Terra cotta ornament is especially prominent at the building's rooftop.

Criterion 5: Important Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Old Dearborn Bank Building was designed by the firm of C.W. & George L. Rapp, an important and influential Chicago architectural firm from the late 1910s through the early 1930s. The Rapp brothers were nationally known for their numerous movie palace designs such as the Chicago and Uptown Theaters.
- The Old Dearborn Bank Building is one of only two free-standing office buildings designed by C.W. & George L. Rapp and it is their only one in Chicago.

Integrity

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

The Old Dearborn Bank Building has good overall integrity. Most of its original detailing is in place on the exterior and in the interior public spaces.

All of the building's original masonry remains. The condition of the 20th floor balconettes is not fully known; they were encased in sheet metal sometime during the second half of this century, probably due to deterioration of the terra cotta details.

One of a pair of terra cotta squirrels above each of the 4th floor projections.

On the exterior, new windows that closely resemble the old windows have replaced the originals. All of the replacement windows and doors have been placed within the original openings. Some windows have been blocked with ventilators. Again, these are contained within the original openings. There are also new storefront windows and entry doors. The northernmost entrance on Wabash Avenue has been closed.

The interior of the Old Dearborn Bank Building is remarkably intact, with the original cigar stand now used as the security desk in the lobby. The lobby plan remains unaltered except for the plastering over of the interior doors to the retail spaces and the closing off of the original northern cross-corridor for retail space. The lobby retains its polished marble walls, ornamental stair railings on the grand stairway and secondary stairs, multi-colored terrazzo floor, coffered plaster ceiling and ornamental elevator doors and heating grilles.

Several secondary interior features have been altered, including the damaged and obscured banking hall ceiling and mezzanine and the significantly degraded ornamental features in the basement bank offices.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historic and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Old Dearborn Bank Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior elevations and rooflines of the building; and
- the first floor lobby and grand staircase (plan on page 6).

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Infant Welfare Society manuscript collection
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Chicago Cartographic: Map inside front cover, Floor plan

Chicago Historical Society, Research Center: 2, 3, 4, 5(upper parapet), 8

Department of Planning & Development, Landmarks Division: 7(lobby), 10, 11 (left, top and bottom)

Insignia ESG: Cover (left)

Jean A. Follett: Cover (right), 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16

Marquee, v.9, No.2 (Second Quarter 1977): 11(right)

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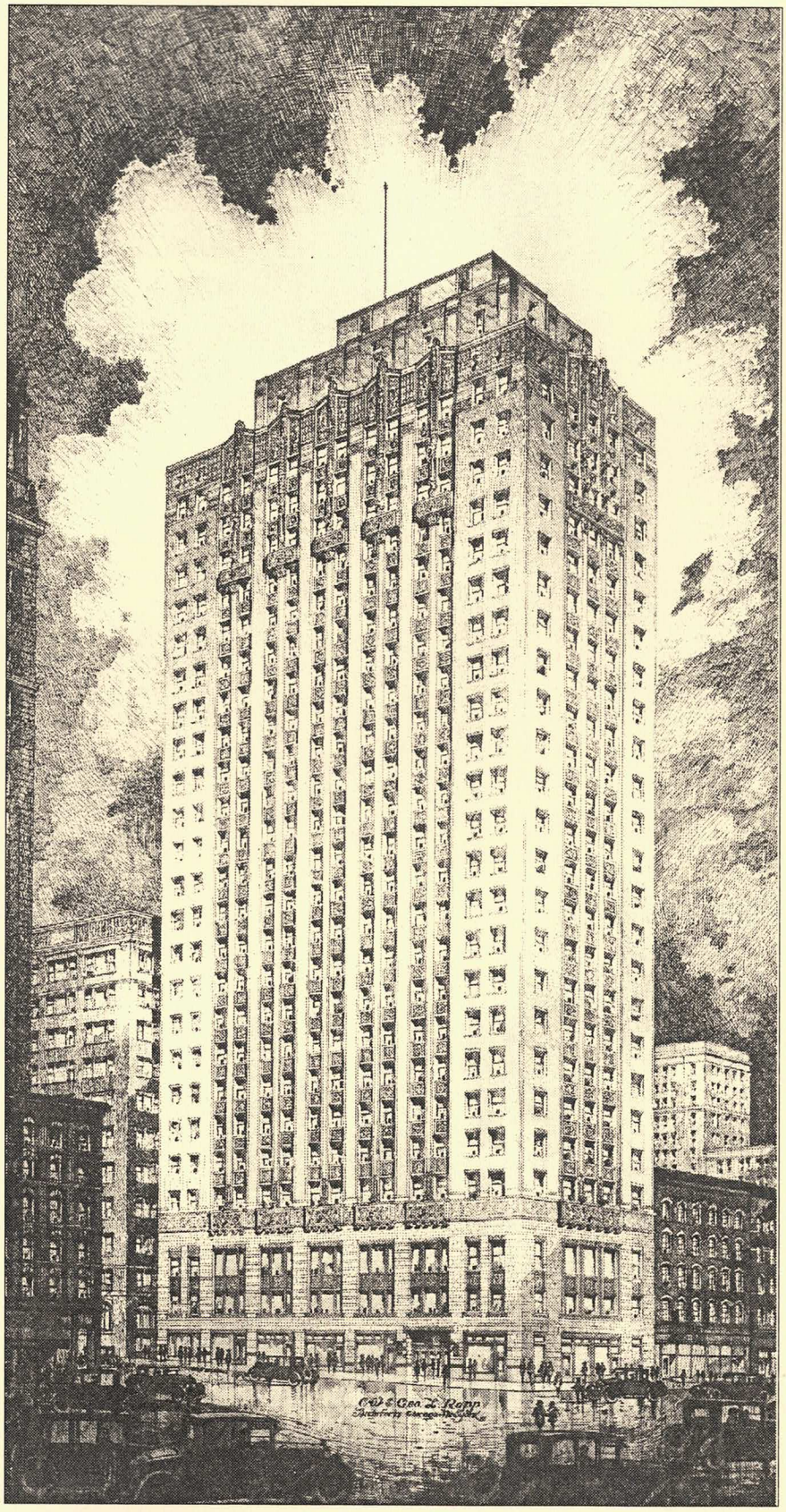

Left: A 1928 Rendering of The Old Dearborn Bank Building.

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